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General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

46th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Swe (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786, A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382 and A/58/395 and Corr.1)

Mr. Mekprayoonthong (Thailand): I should like to begin by joining previous speakers in expressing my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/58/351, which provides details of the status of implementation of actions described in last's year report (A/57/387) entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", as well as for his other related reports. My delegation also commends the President of the Assembly for his determination to pursue this matter further as one of his top priorities for the current session. We keenly anticipate his pragmatic approach to making this session an action-oriented one. We attach great importance to the strengthening of the United Nations system and pledge our continued support for the initiatives put forward by the Secretary-General to bring about further improvements in the United Nations. As the sole universal multilateral institution, the United Nations needs to evolve with the times and changing geopolitical landscape and demonstrate renewed vigour in order to remain effective and relevant.

The exercise of strengthening the United Nations system encompasses restructuring, reform, the revitalization of its main bodies and organs and the modernization of the Secretariat. We believe that the rationalization of the work of the General Assembly is at the heart of this exercise. It may be recalled that, at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, heads of State or Government resolved to reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively. During the general debate this year, we also heard an overwhelming number of delegations underlining the importance and urgency of the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly. In this regard, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made yesterday by Morocco and Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We would also like to add a few words of our own as our initial input to the process of United Nations reform. In doing so, we wish to refer to the useful note prepared by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretariat for last

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week's informal consultations on this issue as the departure point for our discussion.

Thailand supports the framework of action, as proposed by the President, to consider the revitalization issue under two clusters: enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly; and improving the working methods of the General Assembly. Under the cluster relating to the authority and role of the General Assembly, my delegation fully endorses the proposals in paragraph 11 of the President's note, especially those relating to the enhancement of the General Assembly so that it can fulfil its role as envisaged in the Charter, as well as of the role of the President and the capacity of his Office. Under the cluster dealing with the working methods of the General Assembly, Thailand can go along with all proposals listed in paragraph 12, which will help to streamline the work of the General Assembly and lighten the workload of the Secretariat and Member States.

My delegation also supports the proposal to reprogramme consideration of agenda items in plenary meeting in the General Assembly and in the Main Committees over the full year of a session rather than trying to do most of the work during the last quarter of the year. The idea of thematic discussion on issues that are a pressing priority during the general debate also merits further consideration.

Success in revitalizing the work of the General Assembly hinges on a number of factors. Of paramount importance is the political will of Member States to empower the General Assembly to play the role envisaged and mandated by the Charter. In order for proposals for change to enjoy broad support and achieve consensus, discussions should be conducted openly and with transparency in an atmosphere of trust and constructive criticism. Once decisions have been reached, it is equally important to ensure that they are fully implemented. The General Assembly must find ways to ensure that its resolutions are taken seriously and implemented in national, as well as international, contexts. The 36 actions outlined by the Secretary-General in the report (A/57/387) submitted during the previous session should continue to serve as a road map guiding our deliberations, and will be useful in setting clear benchmarks for all actions requiring implementation.

Reform is certainly not an indefinite process. We must aim to deal with this daunting challenge within a specific time frame. The reform of the United Nations must be carried out in such a way as to enable the United Nations to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, as intended. While there certainly is a prevailing sense of urgency with regard to the need to revitalize the General Assembly and to reform the United Nations, the momentum needs to be sustained if we are to reach the targets that we have set. My delegation remains steadfast in its support for a more effective and relevant General Assembly and United Nations. We also support the Secretary-General's initiative to set up a panel of eminent personalities and stand ready to provide further inputs and to play our part to achieve that end.

Mr. De Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal): I fully subscribe to the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. It covers all the main points raised by the President of the Assembly in his non-paper, and by other delegations in the informal consultations. I think that our suggestions should be the object of a constructive dialogue with a view to strengthening the United Nations system.

I would like to touch on just two points. The revitalization of the General Assembly is of immense political importance and is fundamental for the development of strategies aimed at achieving the goals set by the Charter.

The Assembly is the cornerstone of the Organization. It is not always fully realized that it is the main source of the legitimacy of the United Nations. This role is more than symbolic; continued neglect of this body is damaging to the whole United Nations system. The European Union points out several priorities in this matter that we must explore.

But there is one point I would stress here: the need for our debates to be more interactive. Several things can and should be done, but let me add a simple and rather minor one: let us hold most of our debates in another room. Last year when, as Vice-President, I was called on to chair meetings, I had the sensation — which you may feel now — that this room looks more than half empty and is too big to encourage true dialogue. Why not meet regularly in another room, when we do not expect large audiences?

Another point mentioned in the statement of the European Union is the need to address the issue of the Economic and Social Council's interaction with the Security Council, for example on post-conflict issues.

This touches on the way both bodies could work better and — more than that — how they could respond to a fundamental goal of the international system: conflict prevention. At present not much is done, even in the case of countries with respect to which we all feel that the complexity of the social situation, the insufficiencies of the State and the economic failure should be recognized and addressed together. It is particularly striking in the case of countries in post-conflict situations where a peacekeeping operation is phased out and the country, sometimes still very vulnerable, is left alone.

We consider that in those pre- and post-conflict situations there are three needs that the international community must address: reinforcing the internal security system; building up national institutions and making the State stronger and more capable of doing its job; and, finally, creating a viable economy.

The Security Council, hard pressed with the urgent and pressing needs of a large agenda, has not, in our view, been paying sufficient attention to all those needs. And it lacks, if I may say so, the competence or the interest in these situations to add economic assistance to State-building and security needs. The Economic and Social Council has greater sensitivity to certain aspects of such problems but is not equipped to work in conflict prevention with full effectiveness.

That is why the Portuguese Prime Minister, in his intervention in the General Assembly debate, proposed the creation of a new institutional mechanism, a new commission with a mandate to routinely monitor cases of conflict prevention and promote conditions for peace and development. In conjunction with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, which would both preserve their respective areas of competence, and under a mandate given by them, the commission could identify and deal with the most pressing needs. It would also draw up, for countries at risk — and that is the case in most post-conflict situations and in other clearly defined situations — integrated strategies allying the objectives of security, reinforcement of institutions, namely in the justice and administration sectors, and economic and social development. To create conditions for development, obviously, the commission would need to be closely linked with the Bretton Woods institutions and United Nations agencies.

International and donor aid will be more forthcoming if an integrated strategy is adopted with this kind of support. In terms of the United Nations budget, we think existing resources should be sufficient to cover the functioning of such a commission.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia would like to express its appreciation to the President for convening this timely joint debate, which provides an opportunity to discuss the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly in the context of the larger question of the reform of the United Nations. In our view, the opportunity provided by the joint debate enables us to focus on the comprehensive nature of the issue.

In our view, reform of the United Nations is justified by the fact that it is the world's premier instrument for multilateral diplomacy. The strengthening of the United Nations would, in turn, strengthen the practice of multilateralism.

In this connection, my delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly. My delegation supports the need to re-establish the role of the General Assembly as this Organization's chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ and to ensure that its resolutions are fully implemented.

In the effort to strengthen the United Nations system, we are particularly pleased that revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a primary focus of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly. In that regard, we find great reassurance in the President's expression of his readiness to take the lead in implementing those proposals of the Assembly that can be advanced at this time and to help develop further proposals leading to further revitalization of the Assembly. We are encouraged by his efforts and the non-paper that he has circulated, for which we are very grateful.

Similarly, my delegation would also like to acknowledge the recommendations contained in the note by the former President of the General Assembly on the revitalization of the General Assembly (A/57/861). We support those recommendations, in particular, the need for the President of the General Assembly to meet more frequently with the Chairpersons of the Main Committees, as well as other relevant groups, on matters involving procedure. We

further support the recommendation for the Chairpersons to bring to the attention of the President proposals for further enhancing the effectiveness of the Main Committees. Taken along with other measures contained in existing resolutions designed to rationalize the agenda of the General Assembly, the recommendations in this note will certainly help to improve the work and workload of the Assembly.

With regard to specifics relating to methods of work, we share the view that the reallocation of agenda items that span a number of Main Committees is best handled in the plenary. The Main Committees should continue to develop ways of improving their own methods of work and to share that information with other committees that might be interested.

We welcome the advances that have been made in the technical areas of reform, such as I have just outlined, which concern such issues as overlapping, enhancing coordination and strengthening efficiency. At the same time, we must urge greater commitment towards progress in the strategic areas, which affects the capability of the United Nations system to uphold the objectives and principles stipulated in the Charter.

In that connection, I would also like to reaffirm how important it is for the reform of the Security Council to be undertaken without further delay. As we have stated in the past, that critically important body, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be enlarged and restructured so that it can enjoy the support and confidence of the international community. As it is currently constituted, the Security Council merely reflects the world of 50 years ago. Despite every political advance since then, the Council lacks equitable representation, and the voices of vast populations around the world are still not being sufficiently heard. We further believe that reform in this body is also required in order to bolster the legitimacy of its decision-making process.

Permit me now to make similar comments about the Economic and Social Council, which should continue to strengthen its role as the mechanism for system-wide coordination. My delegation was pleased with the Council in its 2003 coordination segment, the topic of which was the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. In this regard, the Economic and Social Council decided to establish a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session, based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Similarly, we feel that a cross-sectoral approach should be used by the Council to review the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits and their follow-up processes and to assess its impact on the achievement of their goals and targets. In dealing with cross-sectoral thematic issues, the Council should invite functional commissions and other relevant follow-up mechanisms that can contribute proposals and responses from their specific perspectives. Regional commissions would help address the regional dimension of cross-cutting goals and targets. The Council should also encourage greater coordination among relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

At the end of the day, reform must be seen in terms of how well it is helping the cause of development in the Third World, because the exercise is not reform for the sake of reform, but to achieve the objectives of development. In that connection, we share the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that it is worrisome that the impact of the reform process in the Organization is yet to be felt in the developing world. It is essential that the success of United Nations reform be judged in terms not only of the improvements in the way that the Organization functions, but also of how much more the developing countries can participate in its work and of the development benefits that they are enjoying as a result.

Let us bear in mind that the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the recent global conferences provide us with a compass by which we can guide development. In his report on an agenda for further change, the Secretary-General made a case for a more focused programme of work. He also noted that the nature and pace of reform implementation will depend on progress in a number of intergovernmental forums, the most significant of which is the General Assembly. The importance of the revitalization of this Assembly in taking development forward, therefore, is very clear.

In that light, while my delegation supports the Secretary-General's proposal for improving the current planning and budgeting cycle, we would like to emphasize that this process should not compromise the ability of the Organization to carry out programmes mandated by the Member States, in particular in the area of international cooperation on development. In this regard, it is the belief of my delegation that the reform process should not be considered as a budget cut.

Permit me now to recall the statement of the Secretary-General at the opening of the fifty-eighth session, in which he indicated his intention to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities charged with examining the current challenges to peace and security; considering the contribution which collective action can make in addressing these challenges; reviewing the functioning of the major organs of the United Nations and the relationship between them; and recommending ways of strengthening the United Nations through reform of its institutions and processes.

While we fully support this initiative, we hope that the Panel will act as a catalyst for all of the reform and revitalization efforts of the United Nations. We firmly believe that the Panel will be comprised of competent, experienced personnel with appropriate backgrounds in management and the full commitment to multilateralism that is necessary to undertake an important task of this nature. My delegation eagerly looks forward to the Panel's recommendations, which the Secretary-General expects to make available to this Assembly at the next session.

In conclusion, we must find the political will to review each and every aspect of the functioning of the main bodies of the United Nations and we must be swift in realigning and repositioning them. The United Nations of 2003 bears almost no relationship to the one that was set up over 50 years ago. Unless its growth in membership and its shifting challenges are reflected in the structures and mechanisms we put in place to address them, we cannot fully fulfil the mandates of the Charter.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Sir, for your tireless efforts to advance practical steps towards the revitalization of the General Assembly that will allow it to recover its essential role as a deliberative and decision-making organ of the United Nations. In your leadership of the General Committee, you have contributed to anchoring our work.

However, there is growing awareness of the need to exploit this heightened activity and momentum in order to achieve the objectives of reform. The Secretary-General has called for a radical reform of the Organization and all its agencies to enhance their effectiveness and openness. We are unanimous in our endorsement of these goals and would be shirking our responsibilities if we failed to seize this opportunity. It is very encouraging to note the stated commitments of the participants in this debate to United Nations reform.

The Secretary-General's efforts demonstrate that we are on the right path. We believe that it is very important for United Nations reform to be exhaustive and integrated if it is to strengthen the collective work of the entire system. It is quite clear that revitalization of the General Assembly is an integral part of such reform, since the Assembly's membership includes all Member States on an equal footing.

Today more than ever, we need international consensus to address the various challenges confronting us. Nevertheless, in the course of recent years the General Assembly has been extremely imbalanced, as evidenced by the major gap between the importance of the issues it considers and its manifest failure to resolve them — which, of course, damages its credibility and the effectiveness of its role. While many resolutions have been adopted on this topic, most of them — as noted in the statement issued by the Non-Aligned Movement — relate to the rationalization of the agenda and the improvement of its working methods rather than to the more fundamental issues.

I support the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77, and I thank the Group for its proposals of 17 November confirming its views on revitalization of the General Assembly. General Assembly resolution 55/285 provides, in paragraph 1, that

> "The process of revitalizing the General Assembly and improving its efficiency focuses on the implementation of existing Assembly resolutions and decisions ... Improvement of the procedures and working methods of the Assembly is only a first step towards more substantive improvements in and revitalization of the Assembly. The goal of this ongoing process is to

enable the Assembly to play its role effectively as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations."

Reform should enable the Assembly to take decisions on the most urgent issues on its agenda and a major commitment must be made to implementing its resolutions and decisions. Decision-making in the General Assembly, which is based on unanimity in most cases, is a real example of democracy in international action, since these decisions are taken by a majority of those voting. This should encourage us to choose the democratic option, given the failure of the Security Council as a result of the irresponsible use of the veto, to comply faithfully with the resolutions of the General Assembly.

We would like to concentrate on the most significant issues relating to reform. We see that the Security Council is going well beyond its powers and has thus jeopardized the authority of the General Assembly. For this reason we believe we must be more careful to divide the responsibilities of the two bodies. The agenda of the General Assembly, as the Secretary-General has noted, is overburdened. There are many items which are of interest to only a handful of countries that are addressed at the expense of items which are, in our opinion, much more important. The matters which should be given priority should be chosen from those agenda items which appear on the agenda of the General Assembly. Thirdly, we fully agree with strengthening the General Committee of the General Assembly so it can properly follow up the implementation of resolutions on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the reform process of the United Nations and its agencies and organs can only be successful if other reforms are made in tandem with improving the quality of management of the Organization as a whole. Despite the commendable efforts of the Secretary-General in this matter, we do not notice any major change in the situation, in particular in the use of human resources and recruitment policies. Very little has been implemented to take advantage of the skills available in developing countries for work at the Secretariat and its agencies. It would appear that transparency, geographical balance and universality is failing in the case of those managing the work of the Organization.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): My delegation is particularly pleased to be participating in this important discussion, which is fundamental to our work here at the United Nations. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the ongoing efforts aimed at revitalizing the Organization and its specialized agencies, and concurs with the Secretary-General's comments on the urgent need for the United Nations to determine in which direction it is to go in order to maximize its benefit to the peoples of the world.

My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the President of the Assembly for the proposals before us dealing with enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and with improving the work methods of the Assembly. The Bahamas delegation supports the need for improving the capacity of the General Assembly to fulfil its role as envisaged under the United Nations Charter and the need for enhanced cooperation and more effective relationships between the General Assembly and the principal organs of this Organization. This is critical for the overall harmonization and coherence in the implementation of decisions taken by the General Assembly.

Although we would agree that the general debate provides an opportunity for Member States to espouse their national positions on matters of mutual concern to the General Assembly, the proposal that the level of representation in the annual general debate, and special meetings of the General Assembly should be at the highest political level, may pose a difficulty to many developing countries which are already hard pressed to provide adequate representation to cover the ongoing work of the Main Committees. Developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, now make the decision to follow only those items which are of the greatest importance to them, as the plethora of agenda items makes it almost impossible to be represented in all of the Main Committees.

In an effort to alleviate this situation, perhaps it is necessary to expand the time allotted for the work of the General Assembly and allow for work within the Main Committees to be distributed over a longer period rather than the current three months, from September to December, as has already been proposed by a number of delegations. Also in this regard, the Bahamas delegation would support the further clustering of related items to decrease the time allocated to

individual items in the plenary and Main Committees. We wish, however, to caution that this merging of items into clusters should in no way diminish or jeopardize the importance of development issues as they pertain to the economic and social well-being of developing countries.

My delegation wishes to propose that the role of the Department of Public Information be enhanced to assist in promoting the work of the United Nations, not only within the Organization but even more importantly, in ensuring that the message of the United Nations is effectively disseminated to the peoples of the world.

In this age of information technology, every effort should be made to assist developing countries to access information and communications technology which would allow them to become active participants in relevant discussions now, as opposed to later, when the hard copy arrives. This would strengthen our efforts to have decisions made in a timely manner and could lead to further effectiveness and efficiency within the Organization.

The time has come for a review of all matters on the agenda of the General Assembly to determine their relevance within the context of the existing geopolitical global economy. This may result in biennial consideration of some items while others in their present form could be removed entirely from the agenda. This pragmatic approach demands that a serious and exhaustive evaluation be undertaken of the current situation with regard to the agenda items. This evaluation should, in turn, lead directly to a more efficient Organization with clear goals and objectives aimed at realizing the promises and ideals delineated in the Charter and in subsequent declarations, such as those issuing from the Millennium Summit. My delegation recognizes that this is a difficult process; however, it is one that, with the requisite political will, can achieve the desired goal.

The Bahamas is committed to ensuring that the integrity of the United Nations is preserved and respected. We are committed to the purposes and principles of this Organization. We therefore, want to ensure that the United Nations continues in its quest to make the Organization the place where efforts are made each day to improve the quality of life for each of the world's citizens.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We consider the reform of the United Nations system in general and the revitalization of the General Assembly in particular as an utmost priority and indeed a necessity to give this Organization its rightful place and function. It has been said many times, and never better than by the Secretary-General, who recognized the need for reform a long time ago. He declared that we have reached a fork in the road, and radical reform is therefore a must.

The Secretariat depends on our continued support, but, more importantly, we, as Member States, must claim ownership of this Organization, not merely by insisting on the rights assured us under the Charter, but by assuming responsibility for its future and showing willingness to compromise on our national interests. More and more people turn to the United Nations with high hopes and expectations, then only too often to turn away in bewildered frustration.

We thus welcome this debate and commend the President in particular for submitting a non-paper, which has enjoyed a very positive reception at the informal meetings conducted on 17 October. Time is indeed of the essence, and the early convening of informal meetings on this issue has created a very positive dynamic, which we hope will soon yield concrete results. I wish to assure him that my delegation will give its full support to his endeavours. Following his wish expressed at the end of those informal meetings, I will make concrete points regarding the issues before us.

We were pleased to see that the proposal to strengthen the Office of the President is finding strong support. A concrete measure should be the secondment of competent Secretariat personnel to the Office of the President, which can bring the value of institutional memory to the Office and also the possibility of re-election of the President. Reform is a protracted process, and two years still seem a very limited time in which to make a concrete difference.

Enhancing the role of the General Committee is in fact very closely linked to the strengthening of the Office of the General Assembly President, and it is in our view entirely up to the President to give the Committee a meaningful role. We are just happy to see that you have already initiated concrete changes in this respect. The General Committee should live up to its responsibility regarding the agenda of the General Assembly, not only regarding the question of inclusion

of new items, but also in dealing with the agenda as a whole.

With regard to the agenda, the overarching goal must be to make it more relevant, more accessible and a better reflection of the challenges the United Nations is facing today. Ranking highest among these challenges are the Millennium Development Goals. Quite a number of agenda items could simply be deleted, as we all know. It would only require the political will of Member States. A case in point might even be our debate today: do we really need four agenda items on what comes together into one debate on reform?

What is even more important than the length of the agenda, however, is the frequency with which we consider the items that are on it. There are, in fact, few items that merit consideration every single year. For a lot of them, consideration should take place every two — or sometimes even every three or five — years. This would not only alleviate the burden that is currently placed on all of us, but would also leave more time and room for implementation and thus make consideration more meaningful. It would of course also have an immediate effect on the issue of documentation, one of the biggest practical problems today. Again, the General Committee should act as a real bureau and support the presidency in this respect.

The topic of the Main Committees is a particularly vast one, and we hope it will be discussed in quite some detail. We thus only wish to point out the main areas in which we believe consideration and action are needed. The General Assembly has in the past successfully reduced the number of Main Committees from seven to six. It might want to have another look to see if all of these are needed or whether the agendas of some could not be integrated into those of other bodies, including, of course, the plenary.

As an alternative to or in combination with a reduction in the number of Main Committees, the General Assembly could decide that they should meet throughout the year in a sequenced order. The current practice seems to be carried over from the times — long gone — when it was possible to do all the General Assembly work from September to December, and is thus obsolete.

Carrying out reform and monitoring its success can only be achieved if there is real interaction between the Office of the President and the Chairs of the Main Committees. I was gratified to hear that the President has changed the format of the regular meetings of the President with the Chairs, which I suggested to your predecessor when I chaired the Third Committee last year.

The best measure to reduce resolutions is the biennialization or triennialization of a particular item. But even if an item is up for consideration, it should not be automatically assumed that a resolution should be the necessary result. In particular, when the text of the resolution would be pretty much identical to that of previous years, a decision reaffirming the earlier resolution would in fact have the same effect and negotiations could then concentrate on whether or not a report was needed and when the item should be considered next.

All these comments are related to the working methods of the General Assembly. Measures taken in this area must, in our view, have one clear goal: enhancing the role of the Assembly, as called for most prominently in the Millennium Declaration and as contained in the other cluster of your non-paper.

We believe that there should be a real dialogue between the Security Council and the General Assembly. This requires changes in the working methods of the General Assembly in particular and also the possibility of meeting in a more informal way. Furthermore, there is no reason in our mind that the Security Council submit only one annual report to the General Assembly; it could be quite meaningful to have several such reports whenever a particular situation makes this necessary.

We would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for the presentation of the report. We welcome the ongoing reform process and wish to emphasize only two points at this juncture.

First, we welcome the recommendations to streamline the planning and budgeting process in order to make it less time-consuming. We hope that the Organization will be able to achieve a closer link between political priorities and budgetary planning. We welcome the presentation made by the Secretary-General this morning in that respect. Second, we also welcome the strong emphasis the report places on the area of human rights, a priority area of United Nations work that remains seriously underfunded. We will continue to pay special attention to the issue of treaty body reform, on which we organized, together with the

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, an expert meeting earlier this year.

Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands): The message of our political leaders during the general debate was extremely clear: there is a political will to reform and strengthen the United Nations. A window of opportunity for badly needed change presents itself now more than ever before and it is now our responsibility, as our political leaders' representatives, to act.

I will focus my brief remarks on the General Assembly, first of all because the Netherlands mission was actively involved in the so-called Greentree retreat earlier this year and secondly because I believe that decisive steps to improve the Assembly's functioning stand a good chance of succeeding at this session.

In brief, we are in dire need of concrete proposals to produce a more relevant and more elegant functioning of the General Assembly. To a large extent, this boils down to rethinking our way of conducting business in New York. The high-level panel will look into that, but will probably not provide us with solutions ready for adoption with regard to the workings of the General Assembly. It rests upon us, the stewards of the General Assembly, to achieve revitalization of the General Assembly.

Italy, on behalf of the European Union, has already submitted ideas to which the Netherlands fully subscribes. Let me add a few thoughts, focusing first on the agenda of the General Assembly and secondly on the role and impact of resolutions.

We suggest that the agenda of the Assembly be regrouped around major issues of global import. We think that that would make the agenda more coherent, more accessible and more manageable for Member States. It would greatly help all delegations, small and large, to better apprehend the work of the General Assembly and would also help the general public to gain a better understanding of what is going on in the Assembly.

In our view, the eight sections of the Millennium Declaration could provide an ideal framework for such an exercise. Those sections represent, by and large, the key concerns in today's world, as recognized by our heads of State just three years ago. We shall share with all Missions, as food for thought, an informal and indicative note — a non-paper that explores what the results of such an exercise could be. In that context, we should like to make a number of observations.

The current agenda of the General Assembly does not completely cover the Millennium Declaration and its goals. Just one telling example: no agenda item covers the first section of the Millennium Declaration, entitled "Values and principles", although that section addresses fundamental issues.

The distribution of agenda items between plenary meetings and the Main Committees seems to be to the detriment of discussion of highly relevant topics in plenary meetings. For example, in our view, items such as the fight against terrorism, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, peacekeeping and the implementation of the outcomes of major conferences deserve to be considered at the plenary level. That would immediately give plenary meetings a more prominent role and profile.

Quite often, agenda items have a "micro" focus on a particular subject or country. That is especially the case in plenary meetings. We could consider addressing the broader issues that they address by organizing our debate around themes of broader interest, rather than on specific agenda items. In doing so, of course, we should not lose sight of specific issues of concern to some Member States.

The distribution of work among the Main Committees indicates that, in some instances, there is still too much overlapping and lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities.

My second group of comments concerns resolutions. The Assembly produces 300 resolutions per year. Indeed, very few are read by our masters at home, let alone by the wider public. Even we tend to forget about them, once they have been adopted. Their sheer number has reduced their relevance as the expression of the will of the international community. On this issue, the Netherlands is pleased to share with Member States another non-paper containing food for thought; it focuses on how to better control the number of resolutions and how to shift our debate to their follow-up and implementation. I shall highlight two of its slightly more ambitious suggestions.

Since there is a clear correlation between the number of agenda items and the number of resolutions, consideration could be given to the suggestion, contained in the Greentree report, to consider the

longer-term agenda of the General Assembly as a comprehensive list of agenda items. Each session of the Assembly could draw upon that list in compiling its yearly programme of work. The General Committee could advise the Assembly in deciding on its programme of work.

Another new approach could be to agree on a review cycle as part of adopting a resolution. That would avoid bringing the resolution to the vote again the following year, since the subsequent year would focus on review. Only if new developments or fresh insights justified substantial change would the review lead to the adoption of a substantially changed or new resolution on the item under consideration. The review could also decide on the removal of the agenda item.

On the issue of resolutions, I should like to make a final remark on consensus. Consensus can be overused and even misused as a pseudo right of veto for the very few. The Greentree report points out that consensus does not require absolute unanimity and that Member States should not be too reluctant to dissent from time to time. The following are possible elements for debate on this topic: consensus should require at least that there be unanimity among the majorities within the regional groupings or that dissenting Member States justify their positions and clarify the national interests apparently at stake.

Let me conclude by taking up a challenge presented to me by various colleagues. I concluded my statement on the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Millennium Declaration by making a reference to the total weight — 3,000 kilograms — of the brains available to us here in New York. A number of colleagues wondered if I could also produce a figure indicating the quality of those brains. I shall not venture to undertake such a hazardous enterprise. But to stimulate those brains, we need political will and experience in the United Nations system. With regard to the last variable, again, simple calculus indicates that in our Missions in New York, we have accumulated more than 6,000 years of United Nations experience. In no other place in the world is the potential to produce practical and innovative ideas for revitalizing the General Assembly so high. Let us live up to that potential.

Ms. Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): My delegation, while aligning itself with the statements by Ambassador Bennouna on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Ambassador Limon on behalf of the States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), considers it appropriate to make some brief comments on the specific concerns of the smallest Member States of the United Nations. I speak of those Missions whose staff can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

My Government is firm in its view that it is vital to our national interests that we maintain a presence at this forum, although the cost of establishing and maintaining a Mission in New York puts a great strain on an already overburdened economy. For that reason, it is critical that the representatives here in New York serve their country well. However, I shall try to pinpoint one or two reasons why it is so very difficult for mini-States to play the kind of role to which we aspire.

The President took the Chair.

For a start, I draw members' attention to the *Journal of the United Nations* for Monday, 27 October 2003, a typical day at the United Nations at this time of year. In addition to plenary meetings of the General Assembly, there were meetings of all the Main Committees except the Fifth — all of them discussing issues that are of vital importance to small Member States. There was voting in the First Committee. Of particular relevance to my Mission, there were also three meetings of the Group of 77, a meeting of the CARICOM group, informal consultations on a variety of matters, a meeting of legal advisers, and a plethora of other events that we should have liked to attend. Add to that nightmarish scenario the vast mountain of official — and unofficial — documentation that must be tackled on a daily basis, and one will easily see that a dozen or more persons would be needed for a delegation to function in even a modest way. It is one thing for the Member States whose staff listings take up several pages of the Blue Book; it is quite another matter for the smallest of the small.

I make the point to reinforce what my delegation said last year when we addressed the plenary on this agenda item. The vast majority of the work of the United Nations is crammed into the three months between September and December. For the rest of the year, while we are active, the agenda is not nearly so demanding. Therefore we ask again: Can we not rearrange the schedule so that the work can be more evenly spread throughout the year? This does not seem to us to be such a revolutionary suggestion, but

whenever we mention it we are met with raised eyebrows and disapproving frowns. We have inflicted this agenda on ourselves and we should now pause and consider whether we cannot do better.

It also seems to my delegation that we can and should impose self-discipline on ourselves when it comes to addressing the General Assembly. We firmly believe that a more rigorous time frame for delegations should be agreed and observed, and we suggest a limit of five minutes. Of course, we exclude from this suggestion the general debate and other high-level or ministerial meetings. We really do not see why delegations cannot in five minutes make their points on routine agenda items that come up for discussion every year. Does it assist to quote from every United Nations document on every issue?

We believe that the revitalization of the General Assembly is vital if this Organization is to stay at the forefront of serving the people of the world. At the present time, as is well known, the Security Council makes the decisions that are binding in international law on Member States. That is in line with the Charter. However, non-members of the Council have virtually no say in those decisions, which are not only binding but which very often impose financial obligations on us. Quite simply, we are seldom if ever consulted. We are presented with a fait accompli and we have to accept it whether we like it or not. Unlike in this Assembly, our voice there does not count for anything.

These suggestions are made from the perspective of a very small mission and are intended to stimulate debate on some small but significant ways in which we think that the work of the Organization can be streamlined to the benefit of all.

Mr. Leslie (Belize): Belize welcomes, Sir, your proactive approach to and interest in the reform and revitalization of the United Nations. Such leadership is indeed exemplary and is in part fundamental if we are to achieve more than mere incremental progress in the process at hand. It would be remiss of me not to recognize the efforts and achievements of former Presidents of the General Assembly, including the current Foreign Minister and former Ambassador of Guyana, Mr. Insanally, in respect of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

At the outset, Belize aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community member States to the United Nations and underscores, as he did, that we are unequivocal in our commitment to working towards meaningful advancement in this decade-long process.

For small developing countries like my own, the General Assembly represents a levelled field on which each Member State can participate on an equal footing in the decision-making process of the most universal policy-making body in the international arena. One vote per State — that is the epitome of representative democracy, the essence of the General Assembly and the hallmark of the United Nations process of multilateralism. In that regard, the people of the world have entrusted their aspirations for universal justice and peace and the right to build better futures for their children to the United Nations, and more specifically to this Assembly. In no uncertain terms, the people of the world have given us a mandate. It behoves us to act now to ensure that the United Nations has the necessary effective mechanisms to fulfil those aspirations of our people.

This joint debate is inclusive of several agenda items, including that on the status of implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". We are pleased to learn of the progress made in implementation. We note with interest the conclusions of that report, in particular with respect to the advantages to be had from the confluence of the initiatives of the Secretary-General's agenda for change and that of the General Assembly for revitalization.

For the purposes of my delegation's intervention, I would like to comment on three issues in the revitalization of the General Assembly: the role of the General Assembly; leadership, in particular the role of the President; and media interest.

With respect to the role of the General Assembly, in your remarks at the opening of the general debate, Sir, you stated that:

> "The General Assembly has oversight of the United Nations system as a whole, and hence has before it the full range of international issues. As advocate, supervisor and policy-making body, it must give the direction necessary to ensure coherence in the system, so that the Organization may respond in a holistic manner to the many challenges it faces". (*A/58/PV.7, p. 1*)

My delegation is in full agreement with that statement. For that reason, it is expedient, in our view, that we revive the role of the General Assembly as the supreme political body that addresses major international issues. The question is: How would we solicit varying responses and how is this linked to other issues, including the agenda? As a preliminary answer, my delegation would like to offer that the General Assembly may revive its role by having more meaningful deliberations and debates, rather than the scripted and non-interactive approach, and by focusing on implementation of its resolutions and decisions without compromising or marginalizing the issues on its agenda.

On the matter of leadership and the office of the President, we would further posit that the revitalization of the General Assembly, and particularly its centrality, is inextricably linked to the role of the President. As early as its resolution 46/77 of 12 December 1991, the General Assembly acknowledged that its capability to fulfil its role as prescribed under the Charter of the United Nations was linked to the roles of the President of the General Assembly and the Secretariat in dealing with the affairs of the General Assembly. That resolution further recognized the need to ensure the assignment of adequate staff and the provision of adequate facilities to enable the President of the Assembly to carry out his functions and responsibilities. My delegation is of the view that the time is opportune to revisit how the role of the President can be enhanced through the strengthening of that office.

With respect to media interest, my delegation would like to underscore the importance of the press in the revitalization of the General Assembly. That interest may logically follow from our efforts to revive the Assembly's role, but it is an interest that we must nonetheless actively seek out and engage. My delegation would like to reiterate its willingness to work along with others in the efforts for the revitalization and reform of the General Assembly and the United Nations with a view to achieving concrete results. We fully agree with the consensus that it is now time for us to change.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the excellent reports he has submitted to our Assembly, which testify to his ardent commitment to working to make our Organization ever more credible, effective and thereby more capable of meeting the complex and most critical challenges of our time.

It is also fortunate that you, Sir, following the example of your illustrious predecessors, from the very first days of your term of office have brought faith and determination to this extraordinary and healthy effort to invigorate the Organization by means of a rationalized approach to its actions so as to achieve the aspirations of our global village.

Clearly, the tasks that lie ahead are important, vast and multifaceted. They will affect established practices and engrained habits related, among other things, to the composition and functioning of organs, the oversight of their activities and their working procedures.

Nevertheless, the revitalization of this jewel is a possible undertaking, as attested to by the relevant proposals contained in the reports of the Secretary-General before us for debate today. Bearing in mind the time constraints, I shall limit myself to addressing three points: revitalizing the General Assembly, improving the working methods of the General Assembly and the oversight of United Nations activities.

In this, Senegal fully endorses the sound observations and proposals put forward by the Ambassador of Algeria, coordinator of the working group of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the Ambassador of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on the evaluation of progress achieved since 1997 on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and its working methods, the implementation of resolutions and decisions, additional measures needed to curb and correct the relative marginalization of the General Assembly, and urgently providing, in accordance with resolution 57/270 B, integrated follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, with the aim of progressively achieving the goals set by the Millennium Summit.

In the eyes of my delegation, the revitalization of the General Assembly, as the privileged forum for deliberation on questions of concern to the international community, should enable that body to recover its fundamental mission of drawing on the strengths of multilateralism by making — to use the words of the President — strategic choices for positive achievement.

More than ever, our Organization should strive to act — rather than react — diligently and pragmatically, with realism and effectiveness, in the face of the ills, risks and challenges confronting humankind everywhere, inexorably assailing us. From that perspective, the General Assembly would naturally be the forum for the initiatives of the international community in the context of globalization and the liberalization of the economy, when considering the ravages of poverty, illiteracy and endemics.

In that context, I wish to welcome the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, led by Under-Secretary-General Gambari. Among the priority tasks of the Office is to coordinate — at an appropriate time — valuable support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. No less significant are the activities and projects of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Ambassador Chowdhury, who deserves our full support in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action and the Cotonou Agreement.

The time for action has come. I would therefore like to welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to create a high-level panel to monitor financing for development in keeping with the Millennium Goals, in the framework of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005.

In order to be effective, the United Nations must be wary of being caught in the tendency to drift that is inherent to bureaucracies. The bureaucracy tends to grow constantly and become a force of inertia — which blocks the work of the Organization it is supposed to serve. To recognize this, one needs only weigh the tangible results of the endless parade of international conferences — some 15,500 over the last two years — against their exorbitant cost; their sheer number and lack of success undermine the value, relevance and authority of the regular and special sessions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

With respect to the countless reports that few delegations have the time to read or even glance through, the delegation of Senegal raises the question of the chronic problem of the quality, volume and delays in the issue of the documentation provided, while deploring the fact that Member States, especially delegations working in French, do not always receive equal treatment, despite the sacrosanct principle of multilingualism. We therefore need to significantly reduce the number of official meetings and the overwhelming volume of documentation, while strengthening the resources of the Department of Public Information, in particular to update on a daily basis the web site of the United Nations in all its working languages.

My delegation welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to cancel 192 reports and publications in the 2004-2005 budget. In support of that decision, Senegal believes that it would be useful to combine reports on related issues, limit their number and set strict rules for the length of these documents. We believe priorities should be established for the biennialization or triennialization of draft resolutions and decisions, while ensuring, as noted by our friends from the Caribbean Community, that this action should not lead to the neglect or relegation to a secondary position of issues of primary importance to one group of States but which are deemed to be of less importance by another, influential group.

I must also address the crucial role of the oversight of budgeting and administration in the functioning of our Organization. In that respect, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), which is the only independent external oversight body responsible for evaluating the efficiency of the United Nations, should be given means commensurate with its objective of enhancing the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations system.

The human resources of the JIU should therefore be bolstered by maintaining, if not increasing, the number of inspectors — at present a total of 11, three from Western European and other States and two from each of the other regions — and by increasing the number of research assistants, now 7, who assist inspectors in their tasks. In addition to its investigations, evaluations and proposals for reform, its mission should include monitoring implementation of recommendations and responding to inspection requests from the executive heads of the 12 bodies of the United Nations system that have recognized the status of the JIU.

With respect to the status of the inspectors, we feel it is crucial to insist on maintaining the tested rules and procedures for selection and nomination without needing — here as elsewhere — to reinvent the wheel or to turn the inspectors into accountants or auditors-

verifiers competing with the existing Board of Auditors. The inspectors should possess a proven administrative and financial background. Thus, the composition of the JIU should not be based solely on the financial and budgetary criteria. Equally important are administrative and managerial skills and diplomatic and international experience grounded in first-hand experience with the United Nations system. That is why the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommends that the relevant provisions of the JIU continue to be applied.

Any change in methodology would in no way ensure the enhanced functioning of the body and might even have adverse effects. Likewise, the current geographical balance of the composition of the JIU seems acceptable, although Africa's representation, with just two seats, could evidently be improved. Thus, any possible process of reform for the JIU should be based on a methodical, transparent and consensual approach resisting any precipitous change, which would be detrimental to the functioning of the structure and to the good working order of the Organization.

In conclusion, I would like to pay warm tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette for the quality of their reports and the relevance of their proposals, including the creation of a panel of eminent persons on the reform of the organs of the United Nations. Senegal therefore hopes that a new era will dawn very soon for the United Nations through a synergy of effort and fruitful reflection that is shared, proactive and resolute in serving humanity.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The changes called for by the peoples of the members countries of this world Organization are directly related to its capacity to address current challenges and needs of the international community.

My delegation wishes to recall that there are mandates stemming from the most recent summits of the non-aligned countries, as well as of the Rio Group, to proceed with strengthening the multilateral system and with United Nations reform. I must mention the very sound points raised by the Secretary-General to the effect that reform of the entire international structure is needed. It is essential that we all make efforts to make progress in the reform process of the multilateral system.

The member countries of the United Nations should make the Organization more democratic, relevant and effective. That is what people are calling for. A few days ago in this Hall, I said that, if we do not change the multilateral structure of the United Nations and its specialized agencies to make them responsive to the needs of our peoples, we will have doomed to failure the greatest effort of concerted action in the history of humankind.

Reform or change cannot be done partially. It must be undertaken from a comprehensive approach that includes all parts of the whole, thus making it possible to strengthen the United Nations system and the multilateral system. An important part of this process is convincing the Permanent Representatives of the importance of this issue and recruiting their efforts so that we can move diligently to achieve the reform we want so much.

Our countries are immersed in an interdependent and highly linked world, which makes necessary a transparent and democratic international community that is sensitive to the needs of all and is ready to seek comprehensive solutions to common problems. No one can be autarchic at this time in history. We need to analyse the current state of affairs in order to find avenues where mandates and consensus already exist and where we can move swiftly without the need for protracted negotiations. I invite everyone to seek, in the best spirit, consensus on reform. I firmly believe that we need to unite positions and realities so that we can agree on the changes that we all want.

I have attended almost all the debates and the consultations held on this issue. All heads of Missions and Government, including heads of State, and Permanent Representatives have expressed their support. We must not lose this opportunity to make progress, under your leadership, Sir, in the purposes and principles of the Charter.

We have before us a variety of proposals that have many merits and that deserve our close attention. Let us begin the process of change that we want so much.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): At the outset, I commend you, Mr. President, for taking early and serious initiatives to advance the agenda of United Nations reform. This debate could not have been timelier, as it is taking place soon after the Secretary-General proposed to set up a blue ribbon panel to revitalize the

United Nations. You, Sir, will have our full support in your efforts.

I would like to align myself with the statements made by Ambassador Baali of Algeria and Ambassador Bennouna of Morocco on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Group of 77 and China respectively. I also wish to add our own thoughts to this extremely important issue before us.

The United Nations is doddering along, fragile and tired, requiring more efficiency and effectiveness to perform its tasks. Past efforts to rejuvenate it have been slow and largely confined to reforms within the Secretariat. Change in intergovernmental bodies has been partial and procedural. Sterile debate on substantive reforms has dragged on for a long time. This lack of progress has emboldened people on the left and right fringes to question the very raison d'etre of the world body.

We must not let those detractors destroy the United Nations. Indeed, the choice is between desperation and determination. We can throw up our hands in desperation and join the bandwagon of those who wish to see the demise of the United Nations, convinced that it is beyond repair, or we can summon our determination to take resolute steps and renew and revamp this Organization.

Tinkering at the margin with insignificant procedural changes is not what the United Nations needs now. We need real bold initiatives to change business as usual and to relentlessly shape the United Nations into an Organization that has the vision, means and tools to confront the emerging challenges of a new world.

Nepal is committed to working with those forces that are determined to put the United Nations at the centre of multilateralism and to inject potent doses of reform to revive the Organization. We understand that there will be setbacks and disappointments on this path, but this is the only practical and viable course of action to make the United Nations vibrant, efficient and effective in its service to humanity.

This is a defining moment for the United Nations. At this juncture, reforms must be bolder in approach and more innovative in content. They must be coherent and comprehensive, as well as substantive and doable. Half-hearted efforts along the lines of least resistance will not be sufficient, and this debate affords us the opportunity to develop such reforms.

We have undertaken some procedural reforms, as I said. For instance, within the General Assembly, biennializing and triennializing, as well as clustering agenda items, reducing time for the general debate and eliminating conference services after hours have instilled more discipline in us and in our work. Some changes have taken place in the methods of work of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

These measures have certainly been useful. They have reduced cost and have increased efficiency, but they have been distressingly insufficient to make the United Nations more effective in terms of its outputs and results. On the contrary, recent events have seriously dented the reputation and legitimacy of the United Nations. We must rectify that situation.

Indeed, there is no panacea for fixing the problems and lifting the stature of the United Nations. A series of actions will have to be taken and each organ will need some common and specific steps for procedural and structural reorganization and revitalization.

Critical to revamping the General Assembly are the measures I have encapsulated in the acronym CAMSSIB, which stands for Cluster and consolidate the agenda, Adapt the agenda to emerging needs, Merge and reorganize the Committees and subcommittees, Strengthen the Office of the President, Stagger the work of the General Assembly throughout the session, Implement the resolutions the General Assembly adopts and Budget allocation should conform to priorities.

For example, there is tremendous room for clustering and consolidating a number of agenda items in virtually all Main Committees of the General Assembly. During the fifty-seventh session, the Fifth Committee took the lead to consolidate several agenda items into one. Similar steps can be taken in other Committees as well, with safeguards to ensure that the importance of any individual item is not undermined.

Adaptation of agenda items to the changing needs has become imperative. Many items have gradually lost resonance and relevance with the passage of time and others have acquired fresh urgency with new dimensions and nuances. Some of the cold war issues have become outdated, while HIV/AIDS, severe acute

respiratory syndrome (SARS) and sustainable development have become more important global priorities.

The idea of merging the First Committee and Fourth Committee is an interesting one. It makes sense in that these Committees have related agendas and modest caseloads. Nepal is willing to consider the issue of merger if the key areas of both Committees do not suffer neglect due to the merger.

Staggering the work of the Committees throughout the session can be a way to mitigate pressure on the fall session. The Fifth Committee already has the fall session and two resumed sessions due to heavy workload. The Second and Third Committees could also meet more than once, as necessary. This will enable small delegations to better follow the General Assembly's work.

Strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly has received short shrift so far. We must reinforce that Office to make it more visible in structure, more respectable in stature and more substantive in content. The President should have the capacity and resources to perform his task effectively, particularly in the area of follow-up to the General Assembly resolutions.

If there is one thing that can really revamp the General Assembly and help reclaim its primacy in the United Nations system, it is to ensure the implementation of its resolutions. It would be inconceivable to implement the nearly 300 resolutions churned out every year by the General Assembly. But to start with, the Assembly can and should select five to ten non-controversial resolutions for serious implementation and follow-up.

Such follow-up will instil self-discipline among Member States and encourage them to push through only those resolutions that stand the chance of being followed-up. Only concrete results of the General Assembly's work will create a strong constituency among peoples around the world and strengthen this most representative body of the United Nations.

Nepal has welcomed the reforms undertaken pursuant to the Secretary-General's recommendations of last year and worked willingly to implement many of them. Indeed, we support efforts to link the budget with the priorities of the United Nations. We also underline the imperative to strike a balance between the need for legislative control and administrative flexibility in order to optimize the output and results of United Nations activities.

The Economic and Social Council also needs bold reforms to make it more relevant and effective. Key again is the implementation of its resolutions and decisions. The Council must convince people across the globe that its work can make a real difference in their lives. For this, it must engage more closely and substantively with its implementation partners so they develop a sense of ownership and commitment to implement the decisions of the Council.

Coordination and coherence is equally important for the Economic and Social Council, but it has not been able to coordinate its activities with that of its subsidiary bodies and its oversight function leaves much to be desired. The annual interaction with its commissions and funds and programmes is woefully insufficient to strengthen the partnership that is vital to implementation of the Council's decisions.

Meanwhile, the Council should strive to enhance its performance by rationalizing its work with a timely agenda and calibrated meetings. A long substantive session is not conducive to this, as it tires out delegates and diminishes their marginal productivity. The Council, therefore, should meet throughout the year, if necessary, and certainly not squeeze all segments together at one stretch. The idea of an economic and social security council deserves careful examination as well, but such a council should come without the fetters of the Security Council.

Questions have also been raised in some quarters about the rationale for having the Council's meeting in alternate years in New York and Geneva. Of course, this is a politically sensitive issue and must be visited in the context of a comprehensive reform, not in isolation.

Security Council reform has proved a difficult pill to swallow. The open-ended working group mulling over this matter has failed to make any breakthrough for a decade. The Iraq debacle has reinforced the clarion call to make the Council's structure more representative and its method of work more transparent and participatory in order to enhance its legitimacy and to ensure the support it needs from the community of nations.

Nepal has always supported a limited expansion of the Security Council, both in permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. But the questions, among others, of veto power and of candidates for the privilege have deadlocked the question of enlargement in the first category. To resolve these knotty issues, non-Council members should persist in their prodding and the permanent members must agree on a reasonable framework for reform.

The reforms the Security Council has undertaken to make its work more transparent and participatory are distressingly inadequate. In particular, troop-contributing countries should have a greater role in the Council's decision-making and in mission planning, for they are the ones that put the lives of their nationals on the line in dangerous missions.

Nepal welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to set up a blue ribbon panel to recommend reform measures. The panel must be small and yet reflect the diversity of the interests and constituencies to which the United Nations has to cater. That panel must engage in wide and meaningful consultations with Member States and other stakeholders to make its recommendations more palatable to them.

Clearly, the international community has the shared obligation to make the world a more peaceful, prosperous and just place for all of us. It has recognized this imperative in a number of global compacts, including the Millennium Declaration. No one should shy away from their commitment, including their commitment to revamping the United Nations.

Desperation will lead us to defeat; determination, to success. We must therefore choose determination over desperation, engage in reforming the United Nations and help the Organization to win the hearts and minds of ordinary people around the world and to firmly establish itself in global public consciousness. To do this, the world body must focus on three cardinal priorities regarding its resolutions and decisions, and those three cardinal priorities are implementation, implementation and implementation.

Mr. Severin (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to present the views of Saint Lucia in this debate on matters relating to the reform of the United Nations, strengthening of the United Nations system and revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The delegation of Saint Lucia associates itself with the statement made by Suriname, on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community, but we find it necessary to provide further insights of our own on the matters before us.

While the historical background to the debate would be useful here, I have been careful to heed your call, Mr. President, for the presentation of specific proposals that are focused and concise.

Mr. President, in your informal note of 15 October, you had proposed that further consideration of the matter of revitalization of the General Assembly be pursued under the broad rubric of two thematic areas, namely, enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and improving the Assembly's working methods. We believe that there is much merit in this approach, and have undertaken to offer the following proposals for consideration along those lines.

In a very real sense, the General Assembly President embodies the authority of the Organization's membership. The Office of the President should reflect and project that authority, and, in this regard, the capacity of that Office to provide confident, competent and effective leadership to the Assembly should be enhanced.

An incoming President should not have to deal with the obligation to staff his or her office utilizing manpower resources from his or her country. Rather, the Office of the President should be provided with full-time professional support from the Secretariat. A standing office comprising a minimum of three to five highly experienced and competent United Nations professional staff should be established for this purpose. Of course, the President would be free to augment those resources, if he or she considers it necessary, using personnel from other sources.

Even before formal assumption of office, the President-elect should have available to him or her a transition office with administrative and secretarial support from the Secretariat. It would be eminently sensible for the President and the President-elect to hold informal consultations as often as possible during the transition period, and generally work out among themselves mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition of presidencies, continuity in the work of the President's office and overall effectiveness of the system.

If we are ever to realize the enhancement of the role and authority of the General Assembly that we all seek, we must ensure that we continue to work through that body, except where the Organization's Charter and rules dictate otherwise. In so doing, however, we must be careful to maintain and to enhance the relationship between the General Assembly and other principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, bearing in mind also that those organs act on behalf of the general membership of the United Nations. In this regard, it appears appropriate that regular formal briefings between the President of the General Assembly and the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Secretary-General, be institutionalized.

We all agree that there are serious flaws in the way we conduct the business of the General Assembly and that fundamental changes are required. It is my delegation's view that consideration should be given to organizing our work in such a manner that the work of the six Main Committees would be extended beyond the customary three-month period. This would bring about a more efficient use of our resources, and facilitate a more effective participation of all Member States, particularly those with small missions. We maintain that the current system, involving frenzied activity within the six Main Committees, meeting in parallel over two and-a-half months, plus the Security Council, subsidiary bodies, regional bodies and plenary meetings of the Assembly, all competing for our attention at the same time and all engaged in a mad rush to complete complex and lengthy work programmes by mid-December, represents a most inefficient use of our manpower resources, our time, and our taxpayers' money. This system of operating robs us all of the opportunity for more deliberate and meaningful consideration of the work before us.

The general debate represents an essential element in the life and work of the General Assembly, and the regular participation of our heads of State or Government should not only be welcomed but also encouraged. The United Nations is an intergovernmental body, and we would all do well to remind ourselves of the source of its authority and mandate.

Every year, our heads of State or Government address us, issuing statements that are in essence the policy directions that we are required to follow. The problem, however, is that we have not been successful in building the critical linkages between these statements and our work and between the general debate and the work of the Assembly, the Main Committees and the subsidiary committees.

My delegation wishes to propose that we address this matter along the following lines: that we view the general debate as the source from which we would distil the policy elements that underlie our work. These elements would be refined and given greater definition in the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies. There the identified issues would be debated and draft resolutions generated for consideration in the plenary, and then we would proceed to a final session of the General Assembly.

This format would result in greater logic and coherence in the work of the General Assembly, it would make possible a more convenient and delegation-friendly sequencing of our work and it would remove the necessity for major work activities taking place in parallel and the disruptive consequences thereof for small delegations.

My delegation believes that the suggestions that we offer for consideration address fundamentals. We have chosen not to address microlevel issues such as, for example, the redesigning of resolutions to make them more effective. We believe that little or no progress will be achieved unless we are able to effect profound changes in the way we conduct our work. It is my delegation's hope that our small contribution to this joint debate will assist in bringing about the reform and revitalization that has occupied our attention for so long.

Mr. Gansukh (Mongolia): My delegation wishes at the outset to associate itself with the statements made yesterday by the representative of Algeria, as Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on United Nations Reform and Revitalization of the General Assembly, and the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Like many others, my delegation attaches particular importance to this joint discussion of agenda items related to the process of reform and revitalization of the United Nations. Indeed, reform and revitalization of our Organization — as you, Mr. President, rightly pointed out in your opening statement — is key to the success of our initiatives and is, therefore, among our priorities.

Looking back over the past decade — with its series of international development conferences and summits, generating important declarations and plans of action — one might describe it as a decade of commitment to development. But we must always remember that people in general, and those in the developing world in particular, are tired of unfulfilled promises; they value deeds higher than lofty but hollow declarations. In this regard, Mongolia views reform as another decisive step towards restoring confidence in our Organization.

Everyone agrees that today reform is more necessary than ever in order to enable the United Nations to efficiently tackle the challenges our world is facing. Efforts have been made continuously over the past decades, and a number of open-ended working groups have been set up to that end. Unfortunately, little progress has been made in the practical implementation of the reform process. There is, therefore, an urgent need to speed up the reform process by identifying innovative approaches. We need to rethink what kind of reform is needed and for what purpose. We need to take into account the realities of the present world and the challenges they present for the United Nations.

Here, I wish to express our support for the statement made this morning by Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore. I am confident that the points he raised in his statement, along with those outlined by others, will offer important guidance in our future work on this matter.

While reaffirming Mongolia's support for the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a panel of eminent personalities, I also wish to support the view expressed by many others, and by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands in particular, on work in parallel, and that the panel's work and our work in New York should complement, rather then compete with, each other.

It goes without saying that an important part of the United Nations reform process is the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of its role. Over the past decade, the General Assembly has adopted several resolutions aimed at rationalizing its working methods and improving its efficiency. There was resounding support during the general debate last month for the central role of the General Assembly as an advocate and the supervisory and policy-making body of the Organization. In this regard, my delegation expresses its appreciation to you, Mr. President, and your predecessors for your untiring efforts to move this process forward. We believe that matters proposed under the two broad areas of the revitalization process should be given careful consideration and approval by Member States.

We can see from the reports submitted by the Secretary-General on the agenda items under consideration that concrete steps have been taken to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. But, as Ambassador Baali of Algeria, Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group, emphasized earlier in his statement, the measures outlined in those resolutions put more emphasis on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and its working methods, than on the substantive aspects of the revitalization process. Those measures have had a minimal impact in achieving the main goal set out in paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration and resolution 55/285, which states that the goal of this reform is to enable the Assembly to play its role effectively as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations.

My delegation fully shares the view that a genuine and authentic revitalization of the General Assembly can only be achieved through additional innovative measures that tackle the problem of the relative marginalization of the General Assembly and its relationship with other organs of the United Nations. We hope that issues related to the revitalization of the Assembly and specific measures that you, Mr. President, have proposed in your non-paper will be considered in more detail during the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary that you intend to convene next month.

Turning to the agenda item entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system", I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff for their continuing efforts to implement the Secretary-General's agenda for additional change, particularly the initiatives for improving the current budgeting and planning process and reform of the Department of Public Information. My delegation expresses its confidence that, with the support and enhanced cooperation of Member States, additional efforts will be made to fully implement the Secretary-General's agenda for further change.

Mr. Rahmatalla (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiative to strengthen the United Nations and to follow up on the implementation of the reform measures contained in General Assembly resolution 57/300. We would like to associate ourselves also with the statement by the representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In his report on strengthening the United Nations, the Secretary-General emphasized that this matter depends on introducing appropriate modifications to the intergovernmental bodies, starting with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. We concur with the Secretary-General's initiative, contained in his statement of 23 September to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to put forward proposals regarding United Nations reform.

That appeal was further strengthened by the Declaration made by heads of State or Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Assembly in the course of this session on the need to modify and reform the principal organs of the United Nations — the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council.

Reform of the United Nations to strengthen its role and effectiveness requires that specific proposals be put forward relating to reform and its implementation as well as to the legal and administrative steps that need to be taken to achieve the hoped-for results.

The paper dated 17 October submitted by the President of the General Assembly under item 11, the report of the Security Council, which lists the contents of the various statements made by States in the course of three meetings, reflects the aspirations of those States, even if those declarations focused in the main on one single question — that is, the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

It goes without saying that most States have their own positions and their own proposals regarding the strengthening of the role of the United Nations. The point of departure could be the agenda of the General Assembly itself, which annually is encumbered by a number of items — well beyond the Assembly's real capacity. That makes it impossible for such matters to be discussed in depth or for decisions to be taken on them, so that they do not have to reappear once again on the next agenda.

In order to achieve that result, Member States should be keen to raise issues that are of general importance or to give priority to issues that directly deal with strengthening the role of the United Nations. In that connection we would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the steps that have been taken, which are described in his report (A/58/351). We believe that those reforms do not touch on substantive issues, but, if we are resolved to carry out the reform that is needed and that has been demanded by States for a decade, we can do so.

We must show the necessary political will to enter the implementation phase. The statements which have been made on United Nations reform contain a wealth of different thoughts, proposals and views about how this can be done. If a Committee were to take up those suggestions, it could distil from them a document that could be considered in some detail, so that an overall plan could be drawn up to identify what steps need to be taken.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): I join my colleagues in recognizing the significance of today's meeting on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly at a time when there is a growing perception among the majority of the United Nations membership that the General Assembly has been marginalized and its role neglected.

In this regard, I want to associate my delegation with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by Ambassador Abdallah Baali, the Coordinator of the Working Group of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Revitalization of the General Assembly and United Nations Reform.

Mr. President, those of us with a purposeful and creative vision and who are ready to make determined efforts to rekindle the General Assembly's original inspiration and to imbue it with a new sense of purpose and direction accept and welcome the wisdom of your decision to focus, in the prevailing circumstances, on microlevel reform as a more promising road map than macrolevel reform.

It is often assumed that the General Assembly could acquire greater effectiveness through far-

reaching amendments of the Charter. There is no doubt that the General Assembly would benefit from such an exercise. But there is one roadblock — such amendments are subject to approval by the permanent five members of the Security Council, and they can choose to veto them.

Sir, among the issues raised in your summary of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is the diminishing role of the General Assembly due to the preference of some Member States to work through the Security Council. Not only do I concur with that pertinent observation, but I am also persuaded to add that the severe challenge to the democratic process at the global level is largely rooted in the division of roles and agendas between the General Assembly and the Security Council, and the interrelationship between these two bodies. It is a fact that no meaningful reform of the United Nations is possible without addressing the issue of the respective roles and mutual relationships of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

A historical and empirical examination of the United Nations system shows that one of the primary exogenous challenges to this body was the cold-war environment of yesteryear. The institutional response of the United Nations to the cold-war challenge was to attempt in 1947 to shift decision-making power with respect to security matters away from the Security Council to the General Assembly, because of the deadlock resulting from ideological differences among the permanent members.

In those early years, when it had a pro-western majority, the General Assembly was hailed in northern circles as the "parliament" or the "town meeting of the world". But, having become a virtually universal body in the last 40 years, its new majority has been scorned as irresponsible and the Assembly as a useless talk shop. That imagery is reinforced by those who find it difficult to sit through any significant number of speeches in plenaries of the Assembly.

Also related to the above is the absence of any serious effort to establish annual calendars of work suited to the needs and agenda of the new millennium. It is thus easier for commentators eager to belittle and marginalize the Assembly to claim that it cannot carry out its business effectively.

By every criterion of democratic constitutional law and actual practice, the General Assembly is the paramount organ of the United Nations, superior to the Security Council and central to the whole organization. But, sadly, little is known of the General Assembly's powers.

Our debate today must of necessity be inward-looking, as we turn to the United Nations Charter for guidance on what should be done to revitalize the work of the General Assembly.

By Article 10 of the Charter, the General Assembly is expressly authorized to discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs as provided for in the Charter. That includes the Security Council, among other organs.

Only the General Assembly is mandated in the Charter to consider the principles involved in peace and security, and in disarmament and arms regulation, per Article 11.1, and to initiate studies and make recommendations for the promotion of international cooperation in the political field and for the encouragement of the progressive development of international law and its codification, per Article 13.1.

The General Assembly is thus clearly mandated to establish the overall policies under which the Security Council can discharge its delegated responsibilities. I suggest that the General Assembly adopt a declaration of principles and guidelines to cover any United Nations intervention in a grave domestic situation within a Member State. That is in line with the recommendation by the South Centre that the General Assembly should decide that the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the United Nations, in consultation with the Sixth Committee, prepare a declaration of general principles and guidelines for decisions by the United Nations on international action in grave domestic situations, including mechanisms for the General Assembly to make determinations and, under Article 11.3, to call the attention of the Security Council to such situations.

Although it is a fact that is very little known, the Security Council is not exclusively responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Even in the Charter, in Articles 10 to 14, responsibility for the peaceful settlement of disputes is shared between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Furthermore, under resolution 46/59, the General Assembly can send its own fact-finding missions. The sharing of responsibilities for international peace and security are well articulated in the General Assembly resolution 47/120 entitled "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy and related matters", adopted on 18 December 1992.

It is time we ceased awaiting the convenience of the Security Council and got the General Assembly to act, as it is the superior policy-generating and decision-making body in international law. The developing countries, with the support and collaboration of interested developed countries, should demand that the General Assembly reassert its interest and role in peacekeeping, peace, security and humanitarian assistance.

In order to ensure that the appropriate structures and mechanisms are established and to improve the United Nations response in the situations described above, the General Assembly should establish a high-level intergovernmental expert group to review the causes of complex crises and emergencies and draw conclusions on the handling of such emergencies. The group should make policy and institutional and operational recommendations on how the United Nations should address emergencies in the future, using a more democratic, broad-based and demilitarized approach.

The Charter stipulates in Article 12, paragraph 1, that the Assembly cannot make any recommendation on a dispute or situation already being dealt with by the Council. But the Charter does not preclude the Assembly debating the issue, which could express as well or even better the views of the great majority on the action planned by the permanent members. This latent authority has to be activated.

There is another point of critical importance that is seldom discussed. At all times the Security Council, according to Article 24, paragraph 2, of the Charter, "shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations". But if the Members of the Organization, who confer on the Council its primary responsibility, judge that the Council is not going to act in accordance with the United Nations purposes and principles, that judgement on such a fundamental matter must override the procedural restriction on the General Assembly stipulated in Article 12, paragraph 1. Thus, the Assembly is not powerless to prevent a Security Council action that violates the Charter.

In my closing remarks, I want to take this occasion to revisit the issue of the agenda and work of the Main Committees, a matter that has already been addressed at great length by the Working Group of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on United Nations Reform and Revitalization of the General Assembly.

The NAM observations on this matter, which I strongly support, are informed by resolution 48/264 and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Once we adopt a resolution, we should take it upon ourselves to ensure that the resolution is implemented. Resolution 48/264 lays out very clear guidelines: items that cover related matters or issues could be considered in agreed clusters. That approach allows us to address our work in a more purposeful and focused manner. Related to that is the need on our part to adopt resolutions that are short, to the point and, above all, implementable. We have been slack in following up on our resolutions. Unless we devote sufficient attention to the implementation of those resolutions, there is no justifiable reason for us to call for significant reform of the General Assembly.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): We thank you, Mr. President, for your dynamic leadership in ensuring that this important debate on the question of United Nations reform remains and continues to be at the forefront of our work and in our minds.

We also thank, through you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and Deputy-Secretary-General for their leadership in the constructive work in the reform process which continues within the United Nations Secretariat. Their efforts are being felt in many of our countries, and I highlight the United Nations work in developing countries through the simplification and harmonization of procedures, joint programming, pooling of resources, better knowledge management and improvements in the development of the resident coordinator system.

We also associate ourselves with the many positive aspects and observations already highlighted and alluded to in the statements of the Pacific Islands Forum Group, the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement.

As already noted and covered by many colleagues in their statements during this debate, the need for

change is not the issue. Our challenge is how we collectively effect that change. There is a distinct air of anticipation, and it has been stated openly, both within and outside this Hall, that at no other time in the past has there been a better opportunity to make those critical changes.

In participating in this important debate, we wish to limit ourselves to issues under agenda item 55 and specifically focus on United Nations resolutions.

When we look briefly at the history of this Organization, especially how and why it was born, we note that the leaders of that era saw the fundamental need for global change. They realized that the world needed to establish a global framework in which all of humanity could live together and function in an orderly and peaceful manner.

Notwithstanding all the criticism and negativity encountered by the United Nations since its birth, it still stands as probably the only credible world body that can harness the collective focus of all States of the world under one roof on many common issues of concern.

The United Nations has become an institution in which the rich and poor, the weak and powerful can, in an orderly and respectful manner, voice their opinions in debate and be heard — where debates can unite opposites and partnerships can coalesce for the betterment of our collective humanity. It is the place from which the world is now waging war against humanity's common enemies, which include diseases such as HIV/AIDS and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the devastating effects of poverty, climate change, land degradation and desertification, terrorism, human trafficking, transnational crimes and many other threatening scourges. But in considering how we undertake the continuation of those battles, we need to collectively address and continuously review the way we deal with many global issues through the work we do here.

While considering the notion of change in this debate, it is perhaps pertinent to make the observation that the founders of the United Nations also realized its need and, indeed, had the foresight to insert in the Charter the mechanism for effecting change. I do not wish to discuss here the technical issues relating to the application of the provisions of Articles 108 and 109. However, in making reference to the two articles, I would like to underline the fact that, when the United Nations was founded, it was envisaged that it would be a dynamic rather than a static body.

We are pleased that much has already been said about the many issues that we should all be concerned about when discussing reforms. So, rather than merely reiterating the many valuable contributions already made, I would like to focus on the process of making resolutions as we currently practice it at the United Nations.

At various times, we are reminded of the many resolutions that form part of the records of the United Nations. While many remain dormant because they have been unable to implement or do not have a realistic purpose, others are annually rehashed to the extent that, in some cases, the original purpose is changed, and they become irrelevant and/or obsolete.

Article 10 of the United Nations Charter does not make specific reference to resolutions, but, rather, to recommendations and decisions to describe the activities of the General Assembly. What now seems to be the accepted practice is for delegations to initiate, negotiate and move for the adoption of resolutions. Once adopted, the resolutions purport to reflect the expression of the will of the General Assembly.

However, understandably, there is a deep sense of anxiety among all of us about the annual increase in the number of resolutions, given that many current ones remain unattended to for a variety of reasons, including neglect.

We need to stop commenting on and complaining about the number of resolutions and get on with the job of cleaning up United Nations documentation as part of this reform process.

So, in the spirit of these discussions, we offer the following points for consideration: first, that there be an immediate review of all current General Assembly resolutions to determine their viability and relevance; secondly, that the process include a review of the contents of each resolution to determine whether certain provisions have been superseded by new resolutions; and thirdly, that we review in particular resolutions which may have been superseded by major international conferences and summits, such as the Millennium Summit, Monterrey, Johannesburg and others.

Turning to the question of who should review the resolutions, we favour the idea put forward by the

Ambassador of Malaysia that the Secretariat, or its Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, should be involved in the process. Perhaps, however, more thought should be given to that particular issue and options looked at.

But we strongly believe that whoever is charged with the review and eventual monitoring of the status of implementation of resolutions will do the United Nations system a very big favour.

On the other side of the resolution-making process, we should look also at enforcing certain obligations upon the proponents of resolutions and their sponsors. They should be obliged, when initiating resolutions, to provide an outline of an implementation plan. Therefore — simply put — there should be ownership of resolutions. It seems that there is a focus only on the content of a resolution and not on the process of its implementation. That is probably one of the reasons why, year after year, there is a proliferation of resolutions — because there is no ownership. We hope that some concrete steps can be taken to address that growing problem.

In conclusion, it is our view that the biggest problem with change is that if we do not change, we will be changed. The problem with being changed by other bodies or by circumstances outside our control is obvious. We need to be in control of the process of change. We have to support the leadership of the President and of the Secretary-General in this important endeavour if we are to use the greatest opportunity since the birth of the United Nations to make further lasting changes, as today's custodians of the United Nations. In doing so, we will replicate the bravery of the founders who fought those who doubted the efficacy of the United Nations, but whose vision was, in the end, proved right by history.

Let us be a part of a continuing legacy by putting our words into action.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I should like at the outset to thank you for your leadership and for sharing your vision.

Strengthening and reform of the United Nations aim to restore the Organization's centrality in the system of international relations, ensure the rule of international law and of the Charter, rebuild the system of collective security, and ensure the development of multilateralism and cooperation among States.

Reform of the United Nations necessarily involves reaffirming the full validity of the Charter, as was done three years ago in the Millennium Declaration. The purposes and principles of the Charter, including that of the sovereign equality of States, respect for the political independence of nations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, must be applied without restriction.

There can be no far-reaching or meaningful reform of the United Nations unless we also prevent the use and threat of use of force, which is an outright breach of the principles of the Charter, which authorizes the exercise of the inherent right to self-defence only in response to an act of aggression.

Multilateralism must be defended, because it involves full compliance with international law and the practice of democracy in international relations.

There is an urgent need to restore the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, with full and strict respect of the Charter. Its procedures, including the exercise of the veto, must be subjected to intensive review, and its membership, both permanent and non-permanent, must be expanded in order to address the inadequate representation of developing countries.

It is vital to put an end to the double standard and for the Council to cease serving hegemonic interests. Excesses, and, paradoxically, omissions in the context of the application of Chapter VII of the Charter must end, and Chapter VI should be used in its entirety and to its full extent. In its actions, the Council must honour the principle of the sovereign equality of States and put an end to discrimination against the non-permanent members, whose legitimacy is rooted in their election by the Assembly.

We are facing a complex issue: how to strengthen the United Nations in an age of an upsurge of unilateralism. How can we make the United Nations democratic in the midst of a totalitarian unipolar order?

We listened attentively to the proposal made by a permanent member which, in essence, would replace the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations with what he referred to as the "seven principles". I wish to comment on them.

First, with respect to responsibility, States must apply the Charter scrupulously, as well as the norms of international law and international humanitarian law, and fulfil in good faith all their legal obligations. The collective interest of the membership of the United Nations must prevail.

Secondly, with regard to accountability, let me say that there is nothing new about the concept of the international responsibility of States. States that commit violations of the Charter, of international law or of international humanitarian law, that cause a breach of the peace or commit acts of aggression or human rights violations, or impose coercive measures on a unilateral basis, under any pretext, must bear the legal and political consequences of their acts. Those who imperil the collective security system to satisfy hegemonistic interests incur grave political and legal responsibility. Strata of power should not be created at the United Nations that would replace the principle of sovereign equality. We do not like the idea of "he who pays the piper, calls the tune" in the context of the United Nations.

Thirdly, with respect to effectiveness, no streamlining of structure or function can compensate for a lack of political will on the part of powerful States or for the trend towards unilateralism. The double standard and the blocking of legitimate mandates do not serve the interests of the Powers and are extremely damaging.

Fourthly, with regard to stewardship of financial resources, the United Nations must once again work to ensure the right to development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and should cease to be an agency for the micromanagement of the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions. A new financial architecture — or at least a profound reform of the existing architecture — is necessary. Contributions to the United Nations should be paid on time, in full and without political conditionalities. The changes introduced in the scale of assessments should be reviewed, as decided in resolution 55/5 C, in accordance with the payment record of the principal debtor.

Fifthly, with regard to modernization, the veto must go. Election by secret ballot of the members of all bodies should continue, as that is the fundamental principle of all democratic systems. It would be useful to consider ways and means of affirming the legitimacy of current and potential new permanent members of the Security Council, as well as of revoking that status when their conduct is incompatible with the Charter and with international law.

We must put an end to political and financial pressure for the purpose of obtaining votes. The political manipulation of the Commission on Human Rights should cease. We are ready to discuss the quality of the membership of that Commission, which includes former and current colonial Powers; current usurers of external debt; and those responsible for the most serious cases of racism and xenophobia and for flagrant, massive and systematic violations of economic and social rights, including the right to development, for corporate fraud, political corruption and even for preventing citizen participation in electoral processes and taking part in electoral fraud.

Sixth, credibility is demonstrated by the voting process and the exercise of democracy in the United Nations. Coercing third States to take certain positions by means of threats or bribery is a very serious matter. Double standards must go, particularly in using the veto. There is a disconnect between the balance of power in the United Nations and the interests of peoples and of the majority of States.

The seventh principle is that of freedom. Respect for the political independence and territorial integrity of States, and for the rights of peoples to self-determination and to struggle against foreign occupation must be universal. Hegemony must cease and democracy must be restored in international relations.

Strengthening and reforming the United Nations should enable the Organization fully to implement the Millennium Declaration commitments as they relate to the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction — in particular nuclear weapons — so as to reduce the role that they play in security doctrines and policies and to curb their further development and stockpiling. The development of new, highly lethal conventional weapons and the use of outer space for non-peaceful purposes must be prevented.

Strengthening and reforming the United Nations will also require the Organization fully to play its central analytical role international economic affairs and in coordinating the development efforts of the international community, as well as in the creation of a more just, inclusive, democratic and sustainable

international economic system. That will give developing countries access to the benefits of globalization.

The functions and prerogatives that the Charter assigns, respectively, to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council with a view to achieving its purposes must be respected. We must put an end to the Security Council's encroachment on the jurisdiction of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, including any capricious interpretation of Article 65 of the Charter designed to make the Economic and Social Council subordinate to the Security Council.

The strengthening and reform of the United Nations must aim to promote cooperation and dialogue among Member States with a view to ensuring the promotion and protection of all human rights, interdependent and interrelated as they are, for all human beings and peoples, and to take effective action to find peaceful solutions to international humanitarian problems, with strict respect for the principles and norms of international law, including international humanitarian law.

In this process, the General Assembly must reassume the broad powers and attributes granted it by the Charter — including those that might come into play as a result of any paralysis in the Security Council — so as to reject the use of force to achieve hegemonic political objectives, and so as to insist that only the peaceful settlement of disputes can lead to security, stability, justice and democracy in the world.

We must ensure that the General Assembly carries out its central functions as the main deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations in an effective, dynamic and action-oriented manner that is in keeping with current international priorities and contingencies and in accordance with the Charter.

General Assembly resolutions are not binding — nor does the General Assembly have the means to enforce them. History, however, provides many examples of how, after many years, the cumulative effect of their powerful political, ethical and legal message has had a significant impact on the international reality.

We consider the main problem today to be the lack of implementation of the many resolutions adopted by the Assembly. But the General Assembly can realistically embark on a discussion of crucial and pressing international issues with a view to adopting concrete action-oriented resolutions.

The splitting up of the calendar of its Main Committees could make a significant contribution to the Assembly's work. As it stands, the intensity of the work required and the fact that so many activities take place simultaneously in the period from October to December create an unbearable burden for the small missions of developing countries.

We must rationalize the agenda of the General Assembly by means of a patient and democratic quest for consensus. We believe, for example, that we must continue with the joint consideration of the four items now before us. We would also like to propose the idea of perhaps uniting them into one single item.

Efforts to revitalize the work of Main Committees should be harmonized with the general guidelines established for plenary meetings. We should not deceive ourselves, however: the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly and the Committees will depend more on the political will of Member States than on changes in their working methods.

In this process, Mr. President, you may rely on the full willingness and constructive participation of the Cuban delegation.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): I should like to begin my statement with words of appreciation to Member States and to the Secretary-General for their commitment to improve the United Nations system. I would especially like to thank you, Mr. President, for your great determination and your courageous decision to take on and to accelerate the very difficult process of United Nations reform and, in particular, the process of revitalization of the General Assembly.

Our common objective is to make the United Nations a more effective multilateral Organization. Strengthening, enhancing and reforming the United Nations is therefore necessary and urgent. Poland attaches great importance to this ongoing process and to all the other proposals on United Nations reform presented so far.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the Italian Permanent Representative, Ambassador

Spatafora, on behalf of the European Union (EU). I would like in particular to emphasize the proposals presented by the EU concerning changes in the work of the General Assembly. The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is an ongoing duty for everyone interested in having the Assembly be a place where goals can be turned into reality. To achieve this, Member States must recognize their responsibility to support the General Assembly's vital place at the centre of this world Organization.

Poland reaffirms its readiness to continue its active participation in this process. With great satisfaction we have heard all the positive responses to the proposals presented in the informal note by the President of the General Assembly to the Member States. Our substantive discussion during the first informal consultation organized last week showed that there is general agreement on many issues and on ways to improve our work in the Assembly and the Committees. In our opinion we should not wait until the end of the whole process of reform to begin implementation of these small but important steps.

Let me also emphasize, in particular, the importance of the informal discussions undertaken by the General Assembly Committees. Many important ideas on how to improve and strengthen our work were brought up in that context and we must take those ideas into consideration and find proper methods for their speedy implementation.

Poland believes that reforms in the economic and social areas constitute an important element in the process of strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations. To this effect, it is necessary to improve the efficiency and review the mandates of the various organizations and agencies working in these fields, and at the same time to promote more effective coordination among them. Poland fully supports the initiative to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and its method of working. The effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council in performing its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination has become an issue of utmost importance.

The reform of the United Nations in and of itself should not, however, be our ultimate goal. We have to keep in mind that we want to pursue this reform not only to make our work easier, but also because we are guided by more ambitious goals. We must also remember that the process we undertook is a first step on our long way to achieve a more significant goal for the entire international community. Reform cannot continue without a clear vision of its directions and purposes. To reform the United Nations system, we first need to clearly understand what we expect from such reform.

In order to meet the challenges related to the changing times and needs, it is necessary to redefine the United Nations objectives, and where possible, improve the Organization and reinvigorate its operations. The United Nations, if it wants to preserve its vital role as the most important multilateral organization, must adapt itself to swiftly changing international conditions by taking the lead in pursuing institutional reforms, the development of policies, and the coordination of actions. That is why we have fully supported the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish the high-level panel of eminent personalities to examine the challenges facing the entire international community and the functioning of the present United Nations institutions, agencies, and programmes. We fully agree that the panel should prepare recommendations for strengthening the institutional system, not at some distant time, but soon.

However, as the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, has emphasized on several occasions and as we have already stated in the proposed Polish initiative of the New Political Act for the United Nations, is that the high-level panel should also deliberate on the question of a common political framework that would form a basis upon which the new institutional system could be built. The panel's work should not only focus on the reform of current organs and agencies, but should also embody a new reinforced basis for the United Nations mandate and delineate the functions of the United Nations.

In our opinion, the panel should concentrate part of its work on the creation of a new catalogue of universal values shared by the international community. This process should prove to be of utmost importance as a basis for further cooperation with the objective of benefiting all humanity. This catalogue should include the values already mentioned in the Millennium Declaration: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and mutual responsibility. They need, however, to be further evaluated and adjusted to present reality and broadened and clarified

to highlight their diverse aspects depending on the circumstances of the contemporary world. At the same time, the study of the question how to relate those values to the legal norms currently in force in the United Nations institutional system and how to make them more relevant to other contemporary problems, should also be undertaken by the panel.

We certainly expect that the report of the panel will provide a conceptual and holistic reflection on the nature of the changes in the international system and a vision of a more effective international order. The report should, in our opinion, contain answers to questions posed by present challenges, including security risks related to globalization and non-State actors, development gaps, international solidarity and good governance.

We hope that the United Nations of the twenty-first century will remain an organization of nation States responding to its Members' concerns and needs and fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people of the world, whom it was created to serve. We cannot build a world without a strong commitment to act together through the United Nations. It is only our actions that will define the place and the role of the United Nations in the international arena. On behalf of Poland, I can assure you that we will actively cooperate to achieve this goal.

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the reports he has submitted and which are now being considered by the General Assembly. My delegation would also like to support the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We would also like to concur with the statement made by the representative of Morocco speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

These reports should be seen in the broader context of the reform of our Organization, which for sixty years now has proved its relevance and effectiveness. It is also true, logical and normal that there are some aspects of this Organization that have to be reconsidered and addressed at the appropriate time. This involves work on advancing and consolidating the concepts and principles of the founding fathers, which are our cultural heritage.

The philosophy of the reform should be based on an essential concept, namely that reform is a means rather than an end in itself. That being so, the Syrian delegation, like other delegations, is convinced that strengthening the United Nations as an international body for deliberations should be an essential goal of reform. We welcome the constructive initiatives taken by the Secretary-General in order to achieve this objective. Although some of those proposals will need in-depth consideration, his sincere efforts are commendable and much appreciated. We must change the structures of the United Nations by reforming its main bodies. We must, in particular, reform the Security Council either by expanding it or by revising its procedures to ensure that it is a democratic body that reflects faithfully the will of the international community. Reform should also be aimed at enabling the General Assembly to play its central role, which is so vital in the international arena because the Assembly is the most appropriate forum for deliberations and the soundest of decision-making centres. Therefore, we must develop mechanisms to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly, since these truly reflect the will of the international community.

The General Assembly should also play its leading role as the supreme international legislative body. In that connection, we reaffirm that all Assembly resolutions are valid and relevant and deserve to be implemented. We should not allow people to refer to the Assembly's resolutions and agenda as obsolete or meaningless. We should revitalize and implement those resolutions as a way to strengthen the legitimacy of this Organization and as a sound step towards reforming and revitalizing it. This requires the sincere and attentive political will of all Member States.

United Nations activities have increased over the past few years. This relates directly to the increase in membership. But the Organization's working methods have not developed at the same pace and have not adapted to the growing agenda and membership. That is true also of the Main Committees and subsidiary committees, which means that the task facing Member States is too great. In that connection, we wish to emphasize particularly the system of allocating agenda items to the Main Committees. We take note of the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the scheduling, planning and budgeting cycles.

My delegation believes that reform should be thorough and should include all aspects of budget formulation. This process should strengthen the role of the deliberative bodies and enable them to consider all

relevant elements in order to strengthen the sovereignty of all Member States and promote their common interests. In that connection, we wish to refer to the medium-term plan as a strategic programming document that contains the operational priorities of the Organization. We wonder if it would be possible to incorporate this strategic tool into the budgetary process. Every budget cycle should take into account the mandate of the United Nations.

We also emphasize the need to provide the necessary funding for all United Nations legislative activities that stem from its resolutions and from international conferences. Lack of funding should not be used as a pretext for not implementing those resolutions that are very important to developing countries. We also emphasize that it is important for the budget to be geared towards the implementation of programmes. It is clear that those activities need to be greatly improved. The Syrian delegation agrees fully that it is essential to consider in depth all aspects of the budgetary process in order to take into account the views of all countries and regional groups.

We need a clearer explanation of the shortened medium-term plan and its linkage with the programming and budgetary process, as well as the review of the role of the Committee on Programme and Coordination, because we do not have the information we need to make an informed decision at this stage. We believe that no decision should be made until we have examined all the relevant data. Any hastiness in this regard would be counterproductive, since the most important element of reform is in-depth analysis of all ideas that are put forward.

My delegation assures members of our desire to contribute effectively to all deliberations on these items. We are a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Group of 77 and China, and we were among the first to advocate reform so that the Organization could play its vital, leading role. We appeal to all our partners and to all Member States to take these ideas into consideration so that we can move ahead and achieve reform that will be in the interest of all.

Mr. Trautwein (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement of the presidency of the European Union and would like to add the following thoughts.

Germany welcomes fully the reform initiative undertaken by the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General put it (see A/58/PV.7), we do not have to choose. The United Nations must confront threats and challenges — new and old, "hard" and "soft". It must be fully engaged in the struggle for development and poverty eradication, in the common struggle to protect our common environment and in the struggle for human rights, democracy and good governance.

Recent developments teach us that the "hard" threats, such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, are real and cannot be separated from problems like extreme poverty and gross violations of human rights. Terrorism is not a problem just for rich countries. Since this Organization was founded, States have generally had the opportunity to deal with threats to peace through containment and deterrence, through a system based on collective security and the Charter.

We have to face up to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action.

In this context, the Secretary-General speaks of a fork in the road and a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded. Germany shares that view. We should not shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal. Among those instruments, none is more important for the maintenance of peace and security than the Security Council. In his recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), the Secretary-General drew attention to the urgent need for the Council to regain the confidence of States and of world public opinion, both by demonstrating its ability to deal effectively with the most difficult issues and by becoming more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of today's geopolitical realities.

The Council of the future will have to find answers with regard to the pre-emptive use of force against perceived threats, with regard to possible criteria for early authorizations of coercive measures and with regard to the best way to respond to threats of genocide or other comparable massive violations of human rights.

The question of the composition of the Council has been on the agenda of the Assembly for over a decade. Virtually all Member States agree that the

Council should be enlarged. The German Chancellor reaffirmed that position in his statement before the Assembly on 25 September.

The Security Council is not the only institution that needs strengthening. The Secretariat will have to find ways to work even more effectively; the Assembly itself needs to be strengthened; the role of the Economic and Social Council, and the role of the United Nations as a whole in economic and social affairs, including its relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions, need to be rethought and reinvigorated; and, finally, the role of the Trusteeship Council should be reviewed. This is all clearly reflected in the EU statement.

Germany looks forward to the findings of the high-level panel of eminent personalities, which, we are sure, will be a vital and important guide for us in the areas of current challenges to peace and security; the contribution which collective action can make in addressing these challenges; the review of the functioning of the major organs of the United Nations; and ways of strengthening the United Nations through reform of its institutions and processes. Germany, together with its partners, will support this process and the implementation of its results.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): Allow me to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/59) and to express support for the proposals contained therein.

The Eritrean delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. However, I wish to make some additional observations on certain issues.

My delegation also welcomes Secretary-General Kofi Annan's decision to create a high-level panel of eminent personalities which would make recommendations that would enhance our Organization's capacity to face the realities of the new century.

I must also seize this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your commitment to the strengthening of the United Nations system and for the proposals contained in the non-paper you issued.

The proposal for the strengthening, and thus the reform, of the United Nations comes during a period of transition which witnessed the end of the cold war and the advent of globalization, with their attendant consequences. It also comes at an auspicious time, when an overwhelming number of Member States, as well as global civil society, seem to be committed to the establishment of an international order free of fear and want and to have created a solid consensus which recognizes the interconnectedness of security — that is, human security — human development and human rights. It also comes at a time of hope and reflects a sense of optimism that the United Nations remains the only institution that can protect and promote security, development and the rule of law.

Yet there are some challenges to be overcome. Among them are the crisis of multilateralism, if only because some members no longer seem to have faith in the United Nations, citing its inability quickly to adapt to new realities and an identity crisis that is rooted in what the United Nations can and cannot do.

In spite of this, however, there is general consensus that the United Nations has become humanity's indispensable institution. This has been confirmed by recent events and by the Organization's proud record in the avoidance of global war, the development and refinement of international law, peacekeeping and peacemaking, the defence of human rights, and, above all, decolonization. It has also demonstrated the usefulness of collective action on such global issues as the environment, population, HIV/AIDS, terrorism and other issues of common concern to humankind.

On the other hand, the United Nations needs to be strengthened if it is credibly to meet the demands and expectations of a fast-changing world. It has become obvious that the United Nations and its allied organizations can no longer accomplish their missions on the basis of the vision of a bygone international order and of their existing mandates and structures. It is thus imperative to dream up a new vision, to recast the mandate and to upgrade the structure of the Organization if it is to become an efficient and meaningful instrument for global peace and development in the new world order.

The United Nations Charter is a magnificent document, and many of the current challenges and problems facing the world can be met or resolved by

faithfully adhering to its values, norms and principles, and by revitalizing old institutions and mechanisms on the basis of its provisions. Yet there will also have to be some additions, to respond to new realities.

To that end, Member States must be ready to accept new realities, including globalization; new hopes and expectations on the part of peoples — all peoples — of seeing the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; new responsibilities relative to the eradication of poverty, famine and plagues of biblical proportions; the speedy elimination of terrorism; the desire of citizens to master their destinies; and the need to adopt new paradigms, including, in particular, those related to security and development, the relationship between societies as well as within societies, and the relationship of human beings to their environment.

The Millennium Declaration is the document that contains the essential conditions which buttress and uphold the Charter and, by enunciating clearly our commitment to strengthen, and thereby ensure the continued relevance of, our organization; identifying humanity's common concerns; forging common goals and objectives; refining old, and formulating new principles, norms and values; defining our priorities; and establishing a cooperative programme of action, it will enable us boldly to face the complex new realities.

In fulfilment of the Millennium Declaration's message of goodwill and cooperation for mutual benefit, the Organization must be able to function as an independent, truly universal and pluralist agent and facilitate the sharing of experiences and ideas, promote tolerance and mutual understanding through dialogue among civilizations, countries and peoples, and propose varied policy options to guide the international community during these early days of the new order.

The Organization can execute its mandate faithfully, credibly and effectively if its institutions are empowered and enabled to operate smoothly on the basis of the tasks and duties allocated to them by the Charter and, now, the Millennium Declaration, with some essential changes made to correct past mistakes and to respond to the exigencies of the times.

There is no denying that, in spite of the hollow myth of an "automatic majority" of Third World countries controlling the affairs of the United Nations, it is, in fact, the major Powers of the developed countries which are in control of the operations of the Organization. It is clear that the present distribution of power and influence is counterproductive. It is therefore urgent that a new system, based on the provisions of the Charter but reflecting the general and specific responsibilities of countries, be created to break old patterns, correct imbalances and restore old powers. In effect, the United Nations must be democratized.

In this connection, the General Assembly — the main deliberative organ of the United Nations, in which the principle of one State, one vote is operational — must be revitalized by restoring the powers and functions bestowed on it by the Charter. In this connection, the Eritrean delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by those delegations which consider it essential to further strengthen the office of the President of the General Assembly.

The Security Council has made praiseworthy improvements in its working methods. However, the call for greater transparency and accountability has yet to elicit any meaningful response. The Eritrean delegation is also convinced that the expansion of the membership of the Council is essential if the Council is to reflect the reality governing current international relations and to make it more representative. The revitalization of the Economic and Social Council is also essential in view of the current organizational weakness in the area of economic and social affairs.

The Eritrean delegation recognizes that public opinion plays an essential role in the strengthening of the United Nations. Accordingly, my delegation notes with thanks the proposals submitted by the Secretary-General to redefine the functions of the Department of Public Information.

I would like to conclude by declaring that, in spite of the bitter experience and memory of Eritreans, the State of Eritrea recognizes that the United Nations is humanity's beacon of hope for a safer and better world because, on the one hand, it symbolizes justice, fairness, the rule of law and "best practice" State behaviour, while, on the other, it is now certain that, without the United Nations, no country, including the mighty, can achieve the global public good of peace, prosperity, sustainable development and good governance. Eritrea is therefore committed to the strengthening of the United Nations and hopes that its faith and commitment are not misplaced.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): The reports before us follow upon document A/57/786, submitted last year by the Secretary-General, entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" — a document that was nothing less than extraordinary. It was concise, candid and constructive. It was a work that embodied the spirit of the agenda itself, calling for fewer reports, richer in content and shorter in length.

Now that the Secretary-General's vision is moving into the implementation stage, I would like to comment on four specific aspects of the programme that are of particular interest to my delegation.

First, regarding the work of this body, the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has suggested the combining of duplicative discussions and the reduction of recurring agenda items. My delegation has frequently lamented the automatic annual rehash of resolutions without regard for the relevance of their content or the efficiency of their treatment. A reduction in the number of overlapping resolutions could be achieved by simply merging and editing draft texts, thus creating important savings in time, money and paperwork. The pattern of recurring agenda items is particularly annoying and wasteful. We support the Secretary-General's call for a rigorous review of this practice and his suggestion that many issues no longer be addressed annually. We also take note with satisfaction of the beginnings of the implementation of this suggestion, in the form of a growing number of joint debates. Yet even more needs to be done.

Secondly, the Secretary-General's call for realigned priorities, including a focus on technology-based development solutions; water issues; the promotion of good governance as the foundation for peace; and the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations to fight terrorism — these are goals that seem to my delegation to be right on target. From our perspective, those four priorities constitute the building blocks for regional reconciliation and provide a promise of cooperation, development and prosperity for all peace-loving peoples.

Thirdly, in his report, the Secretary-General observes that the Department of Public Information has suffered from a fragmentation of its efforts as a result of too many mandates and missions. Our delegation could not agree more with that statement. The valuable resources of this Organization have been squandered on unnecessary and partial information efforts, perpetuated by partisan political perspectives. It is hoped that the new operating model for the Department for Public Information proposed by the Secretary-General will resolve this wasteful and counterproductive phenomenon.

Lastly, the Secretary-General has called for the establishment of a panel to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and to offer practical recommendations for approved modalities of interaction. The effort to bring about improved engagement with civil society, based on procedures and policies that reflect greater coherence, consistency and predictability, is indeed welcome. The terms and conditions governing the accreditation and participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences should indeed be reviewed and improved, in order to, among other things, protect the focus of this Organization from being appropriated by hidden agendas.

In conclusion, we sincerely welcome the efforts begun to faithfully implement the groundbreaking report of the Secretary-General and hope that they remain focused and on target. We stand ready to assist you, Mr. President, in your efforts to turn this vision into a reality.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.